

Andrea Castilla; Denise Cohen; Austin Davis; Thomas Day, Jr.; Christiana Duarte; Stacey Etcheber; Brian Fraser; Keri Galvan; Dana Gardner; Angela Gomez; Rocio Guillen Rocha; Charleston Hartfield, a police officer off duty; Chris Hazencomb; Jennifer Topaz Irvine; Teresa Nicol Kimura; Jessica Klymchuk; Carly Kreibaum; Rhonda LeRocque; Victor Link; Jordan McIllood; Kelsey Meadows; Calla-Marie Medig; James "Sonny" Melton; Patricia Mestas; Austin Meyer; Adrian Murfitt; Rachael Parker; Jenny Parks; Carrie Parsons; Lisa Patterson; John Phippen; Melissa Ramirez; Jordyn Rivera; Quinton Robbins; Cameron Robinson; Tara Roe; Lisa Romero-Muniz; Chris Roybal; Brett Schwanbeck; Bailey Schweitzer; Laura Shipp; Erick Silva; Susan Smith; Brennan Stewart; Derrick "Bo" Taylor; Neysa Tonks; Michelle Vo; Kurt von Tillow; and Bill Wolfe.

These are the 58 people who lost their lives from gun violence in my district in Nevada; 58 more reasons why we shouldn't stand silent, but we need to take action now.

□ 1015

#### RECOGNIZING NATIONAL OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION'S AIRCRAFT OPERATIONS CENTER

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. ABRAHAM) for 5 minutes.

Mr. ABRAHAM. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to bring attention to the critical and lifesaving work being done by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Aircraft Operations Center.

On September 23, I had a front row seat flying into the eye of Hurricane Maria as it headed toward Puerto Rico and the coastal United States. I rode through the hurricane aboard a NOAA P-3 Orion operated by the highly specialized workforce of the NOAA Commissioned Officer Corps, civilian technicians, meteorologists from NOAA, and others, who have safely navigated these hurricanes for decades.

The P-3's instruments collect and transmit realtime weather data from storms far out to the sea back to the mainland. This data is critical for hurricane forecasters used by the American public and emergency managers.

Providing the most accurate forecasts of hurricane track and intensity, as early as possible, is the focus of these flights. Whether a strong hurricane directly hits a major U.S. city or weakens and spins out to sea with minimal impacts is a question that can impact billions of dollars and thousands of lives. These flights are vital to protect our Nation's lives and property.

In addition to the P-3 hurricane hunter I flew in, NOAA also has a G-IV jet that goes high above the storm. The

specialized instrumentation on NOAA hurricane aircraft provides critical storm data. The dual-channel tail doppler radars provide three-dimensional views of the storm.

These advanced technology tools make NOAA's fleet a critical resource to safeguard lives and property when hurricanes threaten our shores. There is no doubt that this has been a challenging hurricane season for the country, with Hurricane Harvey's flooding in Louisiana and Texas, Hurricane Irma impacting Florida, and Hurricane Maria devastating Puerto Rico. NOAA's aircraft have performed tirelessly throughout these events. Over a 4-week period, two NOAA hurricane aircraft flew over 300 hours and dropped over 500 weather probes into these storms.

After the hurricanes pass, NOAA's work is not done. NOAA's fleet of light aircraft perform poststorm damage assessments, taking high resolution images that enable limited emergency response resources to be delivered to the most critical areas.

NOAA's King Air aircraft emergency response efforts to Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria have resulted in more than 1.7 billion requests for damage assessment images. In total, more than 65,000 images were collected, covering more than 24,000 square kilometers of impacted areas. Think about that. These images allow emergency managers and the general public to be able to flee quickly, to react quickly, and to assess quickly in these impacted areas.

NOAA's light survey aircraft also perform a diverse set of missions, including river and snow pack surveys essential for flood forecasts and water management; coastal mapping required for safe maritime navigation by commercial, military, and recreational sectors; and fisheries assessments.

NOAA's aircraft are responsive and flexible, able to deploy at a moment's notice in support of national disaster response. NOAA aircraft provided critical data and support on scene following the Deepwater Horizon event and over the skies of New York after Hurricane Sandy. NOAA aircraft provide data critical for public safety, economic, and national security.

The NOAA aircraft fleet, the NOAA Commissioned Corps, and NOAA civilians are an invaluable natural resource, and it is one that we have a duty to maintain. These crews and aircraft require regular updates, readiness training, and technology enhancements that directly benefit us and our country.

I look forward to working with my colleagues and the President to ensure that NOAA aircraft fleet has all of the resources they need to safeguard lives and property for decades to come.

#### PUERTO RICO NEEDS HELP

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New York (Mr. ESPAILLAT) for 5 minutes.

Mr. ESPAILLAT. Mr. Speaker, imagine waking up with no lights, imagine waking up with no running water, you cannot bathe yourself, you cannot feed your children, you get so desperate that you break into chemically contaminated water, into untreated sewage water, you are on dialysis, Mr. Speaker, and there is still no electricity, or you are running out of medication and supplies in hospitals that are very low.

What I am describing to you, Mr. Speaker, is not a dream. It is a living nightmare, and it has been a living nightmare in Puerto Rico for over a month. For over 4 weeks, while we now begin to focus and speak about tax reform and how this Congress attempts to assist the 1 percent—the wealthiest, the well-heeled—with a handsome tax break, with the elimination of the estate tax, when we attempt to shelve, to forget, to turn our head on this nightmare unfolded in Puerto Rico, it continues to be a living nightmare.

That doesn't stop there, Mr. Speaker. Puerto Rico could lose funding also for thousands of low-income housing units if power to the island isn't restored soon. The Department of Housing and Urban Development, which subsidizes 203 housing projects on the island, is prohibited by law from providing Section 8 assistance to buildings that are not decent, safe, and sanitary.

Every day that Puerto Rico goes without resources, potable water, medication, and electricity, the situation becomes more dangerous and the death tolls continue to go up. This has now become, Mr. Speaker, our Caribbean Katrina.

The official death toll reported by the government increased today to 49 deaths, but many folks fear that it is much higher than that, after confirming a death due to leptospirosis. According to the CDC, leptospirosis is a bacterial disease that affects humans and animals. Without treatment, this disease can lead to kidney damage, meningitis, liver failure, respiratory distress, and even death. To date, the island has reported 76 possible cases of the disease. Investigative reporting from various sources have tallied up deaths to potentially north of 450 people. As of Friday, October 6, at least 14 people have committed suicide in Puerto Rico. They are traumatized and in distress. This is our Caribbean Katrina. A list of 113 people remain missing after Maria's passage.

I was just in Puerto Rico for the second time this past week with Congressman LUIS GUTIÉRREZ. The Congressman and I helped distribute supplies and necessities to Comerio, a small town in a remote part of Puerto Rico.

Puerto Rico continues to need help. It needs to be woken up from this living nightmare. S.O.S. S.O.S. Get resources to them now. It is our Caribbean Katrina. Let's own it. Let's resolve it.

## OPIOID EPIDEMIC

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Missouri (Mrs. WAGNER) for 5 minutes.

Mrs. WAGNER. Mr. Speaker, the world is an ugly place right now. It seems that at every turn there is another crisis—another barrier to peace and prosperity, another obstacle to fight, or another cross to bear. More of our citizens, women, children, and grandkids are turning to something—anything—to mute the pain and create a false sense of peace. Society has been infected by drug addiction, a disease fueled by a loss of hope.

We see it on the news, we watch it online, we feel loss in our communities. This disease is killing our friends and neighbors. Last year alone, over 64,000 lives were lost. That is more casualties in a year than we saw during the height of the Vietnam war.

And this is a war, too—a war being fought in the streets and in our homes. And we are losing. Mothers, sons, daughters, and fathers are dying—from the cold streets of major cities to the quiet fields of rural America—we are all feeling the effects of the opioid crisis.

What can be done? That is a question I have asked countless law enforcement officials, doctors, nurses, addiction treatment professionals, and community leaders. There is no one solution to stopping the opioid epidemic in this country.

This is a man-made disaster. We must face it head on with education and awareness, addiction and recovery services, funding, prescription drug monitoring programs, and prevention. We need to prevent our loved ones from being dragged into the abyss of addiction and hopelessness.

According to the CDC, three out of four new heroin users report abusing prescription opioids before using heroin. There is an easy step each of us can take to help with prevention. We can get rid of our old opioid prescriptions at home. Why chance someone taking them? Why chance your loved one being a statistic?

This year alone, 153 individuals in St. Louis County have already died of an overdose. How many of them started with prescribed opioids? How many started by taking prescriptions from a parent or a family member? If we could have saved just one of these lives by throwing away old prescriptions, then isn't it worth it?

This Saturday, October 28, local law enforcement and the Drug Enforcement Agency will be set up all around the country and in our neighborhoods for National Prescription Drug Take Back Day. They are providing safe and easy locations for you to throw away unused prescription drugs.

I have no idea how many people can, and will, be saved by this one simple act. But multiply this one act times thousands, and now we are getting something done. Mr. Speaker, this is an epidemic this Nation has never seen. This is a disease of our own making.

This week, there is something we all can do. Think about your household. Go into your hidden cupboards and see if you have old prescriptions. I bet you do. Take them. Find your nearest drug take back location and throw them away.

We need to restore hope in this fight, and it won't happen overnight. It will take work, prayer, patience, and vigilance. Hope can be restored. If and when we band together to fight this epidemic, it will happen.

So let's restore a little hope this week. Let's all join the fight to end the opioid epidemic.

□ 1030

## THE WHITEFISH ENERGY DEAL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. GUTIÉRREZ) for 5 minutes.

Mr. GUTIÉRREZ. Mr. Speaker, there is something fishy about the Whitefish Energy deal that was reported in *The Washington Post*.

Whitefish Energy, based in Whitefish, Montana, was awarded a \$300 million contract to repair and replace the electrical grid in Puerto Rico. We learned that the company is 2 years old and, as of about 6 weeks ago, had just two employees. It does not have a track record of working on massive projects, certainly not one as massive as rebuilding the power grid in Puerto Rico after a once-in-a-century storm like Hurricane Maria.

The Puerto Rico Electric Power Authority did not solicit bids for this contract. They did not do what most power utilities do under these circumstances, which is rely on mutual assistant relationships with other power companies.

In Florida and in Texas—and in Illinois, for that matter—after a big storm, power companies from around the country send linemen and other workers to assist the local company. But that is not happening here. The Florida Power and Light Company brought in 20,000 workers after Irma and, apparently, was willing to send workers to Puerto Rico and help, but the request for help never came.

So what is going on here?

A tiny company that does not have a track record gets one of the biggest contracts to help rebuild Puerto Rico in a no-bid, out-of-the-ordinary contracting procedure.

That is why I wrote yesterday to Attorney General Jeff Sessions and FBI Director Christopher Wray, because I want them to investigate this deal, how it was awarded, why this company got the contract, and whether there is any evidence of it being a sweetheart, corrupt deal to boost business allies and political allies of the President and members of his Cabinet.

I also plan to bring this issue up to the Oversight Committees in this body.

On the surface, the Whitefish Energy deal looks fishy, but when you look a little deeper, the Whitefish Energy deal looks corrupt.

Whitefish Energy is based in Whitefish, Montana. Guess what. That is the hometown of Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke, who used to represent Montana in this body. His son even worked for the company. The chief executive of Whitefish Energy, Andy Techmanski, knows Secretary Zinke; but as a spokesperson for the Interior Department said yesterday, in Whitefish, "everybody knows everybody."

Guess what. That doesn't make me feel any better about the deal.

Go a little deeper and you find out that Whitefish Energy is financed by HBC Investments, which is a private equity firm founded by Joe Colonnetta, who holds the title of general partner.

The *Daily Beast* reported that Colonnetta gave \$20,000 to the Trump Victory PAC, maxed out on contributions to Trump for his Presidential campaign in the primaries and general elections, about \$32,000, then another \$30,000 that he gave to the Republican National Committee. Kimberly Colonnetta, his wife, was also a maximum donor, meaning she gave the maximum allowed by law during the 2016 election to Trump and his various committees.

Now, please look here, and the pictures are right off the Internet. They certainly add additional evidence to the idea that Whitefish and the Colonnettas are pretty chummy with our President and his Cabinet. Right here is Mr. Colonnetta with the President of the United States, the two Colonnettas at the inauguration, and a picture of Mrs. Colonnetta with Ben Carson, one of the President's Cabinet members.

Don't forget, all you kids out there watching at home on C-SPAN, what you post on Facebook stays there forever.

Now, I know that not everything that looks corruption is in fact corruption. Sometimes what looks fishy on the surface turns out to be legit, but most of the time, you know what, it turns out to be corruption.

The reason this matters so much is that, without electricity, we can't get water restored to the people of Puerto Rico. Water doesn't flow uphill without pumps, and those pumps need power. You cannot live without water; you die. Dialysis machines, electrical wheelchairs, refrigeration for baby formula, insulin for diabetics, chemotherapy for those with cancer all require electricity. It is a matter of life and death.

I was just there and saw the suffering of the people in the villages and towns across the island of Puerto Rico. Without electricity, we cannot get Puerto Ricans back to work rebuilding their island and beginning to end the suffering.

Look, the last thing we and the people of Puerto Rico need right now is a fat cat lining his pockets with money because they are well connected.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The time of the gentleman has expired.